

## **LACDMH PARTNERS WITH FIRST FIVE LA TO EXPAND PARENT-CHILD INTERACTION THERAPY**

**By Kathleen Piché, L.C.S.W., Public Affairs Director**

On September 26, 2012, LACDMH Children's System of Care Bureau announced the strategic partnership between First Five LA and LACDMH to implement the expansion of Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) for children aged 2-7 in Los Angeles County. First Five LA is providing LACDMH with a grant of \$17 million to increase the use of PCIT, an evidence-based caregiver-child therapy that addresses First Five's goal "to ensure children are safe from abuse and neglect by teaching parents effective strategies to improve behaviors through positive, nurturing interactions."



William Arroyo, M.D., Medical Director LACDMH Children's System of Care, noted the importance of the grant. "It will help expand our Prevention and Early Intervention efforts and mitigate the risk factors for child abuse and/or maltreatment. Furthermore, we've learned from research that decreasing certain childhood adverse events has better implications for general health throughout adulthood."

The announcement was followed by a training delivered by the University of California Davis PCIT Training Center, which has over 70 mental health treatment centers in the United States and across the globe. Videos were shown on how the therapy is applied and what profound changes can happen with parents/caregivers that use the technique.

PCIT improves the quality of parent-child relationships, teaching parents the skills necessary to manage severe behavioral problems. PCIT assists caregivers with externalizing behavioral problems such as aggression, non-compliance, defiance and temper tantrums exhibited within the context of abuse and "at risk" caregiver dyads.

PCIT is proven effective by over 100 research studies. In addition to English, PCIT can be provided in Spanish and Chinese.

How it works: PCIT uses a therapist located in an observation room who watches the parent/caregiver and child interact. The therapist coaches the parent/caregiver by whispering through a microphone into an earpiece the caregiver wears. The therapist tells the parent/caregiver how to interact with the child, providing positive commands for good behavior and ignoring bad behavior. The child directed interaction includes PRIDE (Praise, Reflection, Imitation, Description, Enthusiasm) skills. Parent directed interaction includes BE DIRECT (Be specific with commands, Every command positively stated, Developmentally appropriate, Individual commands, Respectful and polite, Essential commands only, Choices when appropriate, Tone of voice neutral) skills. The result is that the caregiver learns positive and supportive communications and teaches effective child management skills.

